



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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GOVERNOR

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**North Carolina Board of Transportation
Environmental Planning and Policy Committee
Meeting Minutes for December 1, 2004**

A meeting of the Environmental Planning and Policy Committee (EPPC) was held December 1, 2004 at 8:30 AM in the Board Room (Room 150) of the Transportation Building. Board Member Nina Szlosberg chaired the meeting. Other Board of Transportation members that attended were:

Conrad Burrell	Doug Galyon
Mac Campbell	Marion Cowell
Bob Collier	Cam McRae
Andy Perkins	Tom Betts

Other attendees included:

M.L. Holder	Sharon Nimscomb	Jon Setzer
C.A. Gardner	Cheri Meister	John Long
Rob Hanson	Carl Goode	Charles Tomlinson
Gail Grimes	Craig Deal	Clarence Coleman
Julie Hunkins	Moy Biswas	Jon Nance
Neil Lassister	Benton Payne	Marcus Wilner
Daniel Keel	Donnie Brew	Phil Harris
Mike Stanley	Barry Jenkins	Sandy Nance
April Little	Greg Thorpe	Melinda Castillo
Mike Pettyjohn	Pat Ivey	

Ms. Szlosberg called the meeting to order. Before proceeding to official business, Ms. Szlosberg shared information about Deputy Secretary Roger Sheats. Mr. Sheats had successful surgery on Wednesday for a recent illness and will be in a period of recovery for 4-6 weeks. Ms. Szlosberg also shared that Mr. Sheats is in good spirits. A card was sent around the room for Board Members to sign.

Ms. Szlosberg accepted a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the November committee meeting as presented. The minutes were approved.

Ms. Szlosberg introduced Mike Bruff, Manager of the Transportation Planning Branch (TPB), to present on the Comprehensive Transportation Planning (CTP) process. Ms. Szlosberg first made

reference to this agenda topic four years ago when she was appointed to the Board and Doug Galyon was made chair. One of their first conversations was about how important it was to integrate processes so that they could be streamlined. Ms. Szlosberg also stated that data that is collected by one branch or unit sometimes does not get communicated “outside of the silo.” She stated this was a hindrance to the process, and if things such as goals of the community, multi-modal alternatives, natural resource issues, and fatally flawed alternatives could be identified early in long-range planning, the decisions made could be carried through to project development in a more seamless manner and would help inform the project development process. She reiterated that we are all in favor of streamlining and environmental stewardship. Ms. Szlosberg also stated that there have been plenty of accomplishments in this effort, both by the Board and as a Department.

Mr. Bruff began by saying that Ms. Szlosberg provided a very good overview of his presentation. Mr. Bruff stated that the purpose of the presentation was to provide information about two items. The first item was the development of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) and changes that are taking place. The second item was to give a briefing on the Integration Project and how they are integrating the long-range transportation planning process with the project development process. Mr. Bruff explained that by integrating and linking the two processes, it would not effect the good process improvement work done in conjunction with Merger 01. In fact, the Integration Project is intended to enhance Merger 01. Mr. Bruff stated that their intent is to make the products coming out of the long-range planning process better and more useable in the project development process.

Mr. Bruff first began explaining the long-range transportation planning process and its changes. He explained that the long-range planning process has changed because of a General Statue in 2001, which changed the basic long-range planning product. He stated that most people were familiar with the thoroughfare plan, which is essentially a road plan that communities used to show where their future roads may be and any anticipated changes to the roadway network. The General Statute change in 2001 required that all future plans be more multi-modal and consider other elements. He also stated that instead of the Board of Transportation adopting the thoroughfare plan, the Board will to adopt a Comprehensive Transportation Plan. In addition, instead of one map there will be a series of maps for the Board to approve. Mr. Bruff stated that the process is in a transition phase. He explained that since beginning of the year, they have been looking at the old planning process that led to the development of the thoroughfare plans, and concluded it was not robust enough to result in a comprehensive transportation plan. Mr. Bruff mentioned that with the help of Julie Hunkins and the Office of Environmental Quality, they have been looking at the entire transportation planning processes for changes that need to be made, similarly to the Merger 01 process improvement.

Mr. Bruff stated that in June 2004, a comprehensive transportation plan for a small town was brought to the Board and was adopted. The map is actually a series of five maps, consisting of the cover sheet, the highway map (which is essentially the old thoroughfare plan with more information), public transportation map, rail map, bike map, and a pedestrian map. Mr. Bruff also stated that later that day, the Board would be asked to adopt revisions to the thoroughfare plan and they will see that the process is still in a transition phase. He mentioned to the Board that for the next few months they would see

revisions to the thoroughfare plan and the comprehensive transportation plan. He assured that they are moving along and in the right direction.

Mr. Bruff provided an overview of the Comprehensive Transportation Planning (CTP) process and why changes were needed. The new planning process provides multi-modal alternatives. The multi-modal process will look at rail, light rail and transit, the consistency of the CTP plan with a community's vision, and provide early resource agency involvement in the planning process. The CTP process engages land use agencies throughout the process, provides better documentation, and engages stakeholders early and often.

Mr. Bruff went on to say that in the past DOT would work with the communities to develop a transportation plan for them, and every two to four years when there was a political change, the community's vision would change. The community might want development in one area and not another. Sometimes this occurred because of a lack of land use plans and overall vision. While the state does not have a hand in local land use decisions, one of the general requirements of the statute does note that in order for DOT to provide technical assistance to a community, the community must have a transportation plan in place or will soon be in place. This requirement would also get communities to start thinking about long-range transportation plan and how that interplays with land use.

The new CTP process envisions resource agency involvement to varying degrees earlier in the process, engages land use agencies in the process, and provides good documentation to better meet the needs of the customers of the CTP process. He mentioned that having talked with the agencies (resource and environmental), they are willing and want to be involved as early as possible. Exactly how and to what extent they are involved will be determined as the process is detailed. The new process leading to the CTP map is a robust process will engage land use agencies throughout the process -- not only in the beginning when inventories of housing and employment are being completed. The CTP process would also provide better documentation to meet better customer expectations. Mr. Bruff stated they do a good job in developing long-range plans, but sometimes the data, information and decisions are not well documented. As a result, information and decisions are revisited during the project development process.

Mr. Bruff then discussed the Integration Project. Earlier this year, NCDOT received an environmental streamlining grant from FHWA for \$300,000. He said they are using that funding with the help of NCDOT's Office of Environmental Quality and the Center for Transportation and the Environment to take a look at the planning and project development processes. With the new CTP process and Merger 01 process which is in place, we now want to know how we can better use the data, information and decisions that are coming out of the long range planning process in project development. Essentially, the goal of the Integration Project is to develop an integrated process that supports timely project delivery with environmental excellence. The project itself is a process improvement project that is sponsored by Roger Sheats (NCDOT), John Sullivan (Federal Highway Administration), Greg Thorpe (Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch - NCDOT) and Mike Bruff (Transportation Planning Branch – NCDOT).

Mr. Bruff outlined the four different phases of the integration project. The first phase consisted of interviewing 45 people from FHWA, resource agencies, DOT, FHWA, MPO's, and RPO's to understand the issues that they deal with in trying to integrate planning and project development. The second phase consisted of documentation and identification of the areas where there is room for improvement in the current planning processes. Phase three, which will start at the beginning of 2005, consists of determining the products coming out of the long range planning process need to move directly into the project development process. The last phase is a documentation of this integrated process and a procedures manual for the CTP process and all other processes in the Transportation Planning and Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branches.

Mr. Bruff listed several key issues of why there was a need to proceed with the integrated process and why the current process was not working. He stated the following issues:

- the products produced by the Transportation Planning Branch are not fully used by in project development
- environmental review agencies and other stakeholders are not fully engaged in long-range planning which results in long-range plans that include solutions to transportation deficiencies that are either inconsistent with community goals and objectives or are fatally flawed from an environmental perspective
- information and decisions are often revisited during project development

Improvements anticipated from the integration of the transportation planning and project development processes will be related to stakeholder involvement, MPO/RPO coordination, environmental review, alternative analysis, multi-modal options and analysis, land use, and community impact issues. Mr. Bruff also stated that a clear understanding of what type of documentation is needed out of the CTP process is key for successful integration.

Mr. Bruff listed the following as deliverables from the Integration Project:

- well documented and integrated planning process that is customer driven
- an electronically accessible procedures manual
- systems level purpose
- automation for the state
- process to identify fatally flawed alternatives
- performance goals

Some of the next steps include:

- development of an implementation plan for the CTP process
- development of a coordination process for MPO's/RPO's and NCDOT
- integration of the CTP and project development processes
- development of detailed procedures manuals for TPB and PDEA.

Board Member Conrad Burrell asked that when it comes to land use planning, who develops the plan? Mr. Bruff responded by saying it depends on who has jurisdictional control. For municipalities and within one mile of their jurisdiction, they are responsible for the planning. For the remaining counties, the

counties are responsible for developing the plans. Mr. Burrell followed up by asking what happens if the county commissioners in the area do not want land use planning? Mike Bruff responded by stating that according to general statute, within five years they must have land use plans to receive technical assistance from DOT. This was put into law to provide some incentive for the development of land use plans. Mr. Bruff stated that zoning does not mean land use. Mr. Burrell commented that his division needs a lot of education on land use planning and that some of the commissioners have already said they are not in favor of land use plans. Ms. Szlosberg suggested that it might be helpful for the Transportation Planning Branch to hold a workshop for Mr. Burrell's constituency to help explain the requirements of creating a land development plan, as well as the benefits. Mr. Bruff said DOT could partner with the NC Division Community Assistance (DCA) and the local MPO/RPO to provide educational workshops. Mr. Bruff stated that he would talk to Mary Anne Frederick with DCA to see if they can arrange some type of partnership.

Board Member Cam McRae commented that DOT might get more "bang for the buck" if they focus on strategic corridors and get municipalities involved in areas where locals will not cooperate. Ms. Szlosberg asked at what level those officials get that information or get involved in this process when they want to make a decision, like where to build a road? She further asked how the new process will link them? Mr. Bruff responded that they have met and discussed with the MPO's how the new Comprehensive Transportation Plan relates to everything else that is going on. The CTP is being developed for the communities and provides them with assistance. The CTP is essentially a 20- to 25-year plan. Mr. Bruff said the plan looks at all the community needs, as well as fiscal constraints. The intent is not to create a "vision" that cannot be built. Within the CTP, especially with the MPOs, there is the long-range transportation plan, which is constrained by fiscal dollars, air conformity, and other issues. Within that long range plan there is a group of fiscally constrained projects that have been identified based on the seven year TIP.

Ms. Szlosberg asked in comparison to the thoroughfare plan, how does the CTP help with the environmental layering of maps that will be documented for the new planning process? Mr. Bruff stated that environmental constraints would not be reflective on maps that the Board adopts; however, the documentation is the critical piece to this entire process and would be documented in the CTP report that supports the CTP process. The report will contain a lot of information about environmental issues and constraints.

Ms. Szlosberg followed up by asking at the MPO level, where projects are prioritized, how much information from systems planning (environmental data) is used by locals in setting priorities for TIP, and how will they get the information? Mr. Bruff responded by saying that in the past it has been on a case by case basis with the MPO's. DOT has always been up front with any information for the MPO's. With the new process, fatally flawed alternatives should be readily apparent and the MPOs will get all the information in the CTP report. Ms. Szlosberg asked whether as far as receiving the information, do the MPO's need to provide a request? Mr. Bruff responded that they would provide the information as part of the total planning process and the report.

Board Member Tom Betts asked how much time would CTP shave off delivery time? Mr. Bruff could not give a specific timeframe, but did state that it will not delay projects and that it will have an overall positive impact.

Ms. Szlosberg thanked Mr. Bruff for his presentation and attendance at the meeting. She adjourned the meeting. The next meeting of the Environmental Planning and Policy Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, January 5, 2005 at 8:30 AM in the Board Room (Room 150) of the Transportation Building.

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